called in French and Italian; but as the few books thrown in their way were far above their capacities, or devotional, they neither acquired ideas nor ſentiments, and paſſed their time when not compelled to repeat *words*, in dreſſing, quarrelling with each other, or converſing with their maids by ſtealth, till they were brought into company as marriageable.

Their mother, a widow, was buſy in the mean time in keeping up her connections, as ſhe termed a numerous acquaintance, leſt her girls ſhould want a proper introduction into the great world. And theſe young ladies, with minds vulgar in every ſenſe of the word, and ſpoiled tempers, entered life puffed up with notions of their own conſequence, and looking down with contempt on thoſe who could not vie with them in dreſs and parade.

With reſpect to love, nature, or their nurſes, had taken care to teach them the phyſical meaning of the word; and, as they had few topics of converſation, and fewer refinements of ſentiment, they expreſſed their groſs wiſhes not in very delicate phraſes, when they ſpoke freely, talking of matrimony.

Could

Could theſe girls have been injured by the peruſal of novels? I almoſt forgot a ſhade in the character of one of them; ſhe affected a ſimplicity bordering on folly, and with a ſimper would utter the moſt immodeſt remarks and queſtions, the full meaning of which ſhe had learned whilſt ſecluded from the world, and afraid to ſpeak in her mother's preſence, who governed with a high hand: they were all educated, as ſhe prided herſelf, in a moſt exemplary manner; and read their chapters and pſalms before breakfaſt, never touching a ſilly novel.

This is only one inſtance; but I recollect many other women who, not led by degrees to proper ſtudies, and not permitted to chooſe for themſelves, have indeed been overgrown children; or have obtained, by mixing in the world, a little of what is termed common ſenſe; that is a diſtinct manner of ſeeing common occurrences, as they ſtand detached: but what deſerves the name of intellect, the power of gaining general or abſtract ideas, or even intermediate ones, was out of the queſtion. Their minds were quieſcent, and when they were not rouſed by ſenſible ob-

jects